

DENTAL BENEFITS FOR THOSE WHO SERVED 90 OR MORE DAYS ON ACTIVE DUTY

All reserve component (RC) soldiers on AD greater than 90 consecutive days are eligible for dental care through the Veterans Affairs (VA) system subject to the requirements/limitations defined in Title 38 USC. The soldier has 90 days from their release from active duty (REFRAD) to contact the VA to coordinate dental treatment. The need for follow-on dental care *must* be documented at demobilization on the soldier's SF 603/603A. The personnel section will use these forms when completing the DD Form 214, Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty, which the VA uses for verification of veteran benefits.

Transitional Health Benefits (THB), outlined in Title 10 USC, Section 1145, allow for the provision of dental services on a space available basis in military dental clinics. If soldiers have less than 6 years creditable service, they are eligible for 60 days of space-available dental care; if greater than 6 years service, they have 120 days. Unfortunately, space-available dental care in CONUS dental facilities is severely restricted. Staffing of military dental clinics is based on the supported active duty population; as a result, current staffing and policies governing dental readiness do not allow for any significant space-available treatment time. A DD214 form documenting the entry date, separation date and length of service is required in order for the dental treatment facility to determine if the soldier is eligible for space-available THB dental care.

The final option is voluntary enrollment in the TRICARE Dental Program (TDP). Selected Reserve and IRR members are eligible for TDP, a government cost share dental insurance program, which provides reasonably priced access to comprehensive dental care from the civilian dentist of their choosing. To minimize costs, the enrollee is encouraged to utilize the TDP's participating network of dentists for their care. Enrollment in TDP requires a 12-month commitment and includes an optional family member benefit for an additional premium. RC soldiers, who were participating in the TDP prior to deployment and were dropped from the program when activated, will automatically be re-enrolled following DEMOB when their military status is updated in DEERS. RC soldiers should be made aware that a small gap in coverage may occur between their deactivation date and the date TDP re-enrollment coverage begins. All TDP enrollees should contact the TDP contractor to verify coverage prior to seeking dental services after REFRAD. (<http://www.tricare.osd.mil/dental/>)